

VZCZCXYZ0014
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBH #0940/01 1671604
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 161604Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2748
INFO RUEHBE/AMEMBASSY BELIZE 1263
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 5410
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 3529
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 8344
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0907
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 3376
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 4536
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2653
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA
RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0243

UNCLAS NASSAU 000940

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR WBENT, CA/OCS/ACS SCRAWFORD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [BF](#)

SUBJECT: MALARIA OUTBREAK IN THE BAHAMAS

REF: NASSAU 616

11. SUMMARY: As of June 14, 2005, The Bahamas Ministry of Health and the Centers for Disease Control have confirmed 16 cases of malaria on Great Exuma Island, approximately 120 miles from Nassau. An American tourist who visited Exuma has now contracted Malaria. All confirmed cases appear to have been contracted on Great Exuma. Health experts speculate that malaria, which had been eradicated in The Bahamas, was carried from Haiti by migrants. Following initial openness regarding the outbreak, the Ministry of Health has been more cautious and even to withhold information to minimize potential impact to The Bahamas' vital tourism industry. END SUMMARY.

Malaria Outbreak on Great Exuma Island

12. According to Dr. Baldwin Carey, Director of Public Health for the Bahamas Ministry of Health, as of June 14, the Ministry of Health had confirmed 15 cases of plasmodium falciparum, malaria, on Great Exuma Island. Dr. Carey confirmed that the infected persons had not traveled outside of Exuma, stating that the transmission appeared to occur on Exuma between May 24-30. Apart from these 15 locally confirmed cases, Dr. Phuc Nguyen-Dinh of the Division of Parasitic Diseases for the Centers for Disease Control reports that an American tourist visited Exuma May 4-7 and developed malaria after his return to Virginia. The tourist had not visited any other malaria endemic regions. Unconfirmed, unscientific local reports on June 16 place the number of infected persons as high as 52.

13. Dr. Carey reports that the Ministry of Health is taking necessary measures to contain the outbreak, including widespread testing, treatment, insecticide spraying, larviciding, source reduction and malaria education. The Ministry of Health is receiving technical assistance from WHO/PAHO and the Caribbean Epidemiology Center has been in contact with the Centers for Disease Control.

CDC and Embassy to Issue Notices

14. Great Exuma Island, located approximately 120 miles from

Nassau, is home to approximately 3,500 persons and major tourist areas, including a Four Seasons Resort and other hotels frequented by American tourists. It is also located along a common migration route for persons traveling from Haiti to The Bahamas and to Florida. Dr. Carey and Dr. Nguyen-Dinh expressed concern that the source of the infection could be immigrant workers from Haiti, where malaria is endemic and seepage of infection along migration routes is not uncommon.

¶5. The CDC has said it will issue a notice recommending prophylaxis with chloroquine for travelers to Exuma. Post is providing prophylaxis to employees who travel to Exuma, and will issue a warden message regarding the outbreak when cleared by CA.

Ministry of Health Does About-Face

¶6. Following initial openness with Post, CDC and local media about the outbreak, inquiries have now been directed away from Dr. Carey to Dr. Dahl-Regis, a political appointee serving as Chief Medical Officer for The Bahamas. Contrary to confirmed reports, Dr. Dahl-Regis has now asserted no malaria transmission on Exuma, has claimed that the Virginia tourist must have traveled somewhere else, and said that all other cases must have been contracted in Haiti. Anthony Moss, the Member of Parliament from Exuma, has repeated these denials, including a denial of use of insecticide in Exuma.

¶7. COMMENT: There is no current threat to Nassau, and prospects for containing the outbreak to Great Exuma appear good. The initial openness of the Ministry of Health, and its strong public health response, were encouraging. However, concerns regarding the impact of an outbreak on tourism have driven the subsequent reversal in cooperation. This suppression of response to a potential public health issue was also seen recently in The Bahamas' response to a bird flu scare (reftel). END COMMENT.
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